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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS
~~SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 184~~

Action
Info

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ~~SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 184~~

LIMDIS

JOINT EMBASSY/JUSPAO MESSAGE

REF: STATE 214629

1. WE FULLY CONCUR IMPORTANCE FOLLOWING SAME PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONCEPT "ON BOTH SIDES WATER" AS URGED REFTEL. AND HAVE, IN FACT, BEEN ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN TALKS AND BRIEFINGS WITH PRESS ALONG LINES OUTLINED IN PARAS 5 AND 6, AS DEPARTMENT AWARE THROUGH OTHER COMMUNICATIONS. AMBASSADOR AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR HAVE DISCUSSED PROBLEMS ARISING AOUT OF CRITICAL PRESS COVERAGE WITH MOST MAJOR PARTICIPANTS ON ELECTORAL STATE. THESE EFFORTS

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 184 C O N F I D E N T I A L
HAVE BEEN COMPLEMENTED BY CONTINUING DEALOGUE ON PRESS COVERAGE PROBLEMS BETWEEN JUSPAO DIRECTOR AND APPROPRIATE GVN OFFICIALS. ALTHOUGH RESULTS FAR FROM ALL THAT COULD BE DISIRED, WE BELIEVE THAT OUR EFFORTS HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE IN CREATING GREATER AWARENESS IN GVN AND AMONG CANDIDATES OF NEED FOR CREATING FAVORABLE IMAGE FOR CAMPAIGN AND ELECTIONS. THERE HAVE BEEN OBSERVABLE IMPROVEMENTS.

2. AMBASSADOR HAS RENEWED INSTRUCTIONS TO MISSION STAFF ON U.S. POSTURE IN UPCOMING CAMPAIGN AND NEED FOR DISCRETION AND RESPONSIBILITY IN CONTACT WITH PRESS. YOU ARE WELL AWARE THAT WITHIN MISSION OF THIS SIZE, ASSIDUOUS CORRESPONDENT CAN ALWAYXVFIND SOMEONE WHO IS CRITICAL OF OUR OFFICIAL POSITION. FURTHERMORE, IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO AVOID SOME CASUAL FALLOUT TO CORRESPONDENTS FROM NORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITHIN MISSION ARE CONSCIOUS OF THESE PROBLEMS AND ARE DOING ALL THEY CAN TO CONTAIN THEM AND TO CHANNEL CONTACTS WITH PRESS ON THESE SENSITIVE POLITICAL ISSUES THROUGH AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL;

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G-&33 RUMJIR 184 C O N F I D E N T I A L
3. WE HAVE MADE CONTINUOUS EFFORT IN BRIEFING CORRESPONDENTS TO PLACE ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS IN PERSPECTIVE OF REMARKABLE POLITICAL PROGRESS WHICH GVN HAS MADE IN PAST TWO YEARS. WE AGREE THAT IN SUCH BRIEFINGS IT IS UNDESIRABLE TO ATTEMPT TO WHITEWASH FAULTS, PARTICULARLY WHEN THEY ARE EMINENTLY VISIBLE, AND WE HAVE NOT DONE SO. IEME THEME WE HAVE SOUGHT TO STRESS IS THAT OBVIOUSLY THERE ARRE PROBLEMS AND DEFECTS, BUT SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OVERALL SITUATION AND WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED, THEY ARE NOT MORE THAN SHOULD BE EXPECTED. UNFORTUNATELY, AS IS OFTEN ALL TOO EVIDENT, THERE IS TENDENCY AMONG CORRESPONDENTS TO FOCUS ON THE STORY VALUE OF AN ADMISSION OF FAULTS AND DEFECTS RATHER THAN ON THE LESS SENSATIONAL STORY OF LONG RANGE PROGRESS. OCCASIONALLY, TOO, STORIES GROWING OUT OF THESE BRIEFINGS HAVE TAKEN COMMENTS OUT OF CONTEXT AND HAVE CREATED LESS THAN DESIREABLE EFFECT, BUT THIS IS HAZARD WE HAVE TO ACCEPT. WE STILL BELIEVE THE APPROACH IS RIGHT AND WILL PROVE BENEFICIAL IN BALANCE/G

4. UNQUESTIONABLY MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM DURING

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 184 C O N F I D E N T I A L
PAST FEW WEEKS HAS BEEN THAT CREATED BY ATTENTION FOCUSED ON CHARGES AND INDICATIONS THAT KY HAS BEEN MAKING IMPROPER USE OF ADVANTAGES OF HIS INCUMBENCY TO FURTHER HIS CAMPAIGN. OPPOSITION HAS MADE CERTAIN THAT INTERNATIONAL PRESS SHOULD BE AWARE OF THIS. CORRESPONDENTS IN TURN, OF COURSE, HAVE TENDENCY TO MEASURE PURITY OF THIS CAMPAIGN BY STANDARDS WHICH ARE UNREASONABLE IN VIETNAM TODAY AND, UNDER INTENSE COMPETITIVE ATMOSPHERE, TEND TO FOCUS ON DEVIATIONS FROM THESE STANDARDS RATHER THAN PERSPECTIVE OF PARAGRAPH 6 (A) REFTEL. WHILE THIS HAS CREATED SOME PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROBLEMS, IT WAS NOT NECESSARILY BEEN ALL BAD TO DATE. GVN MONITORS OUTGOING PRESS DISPATCHES AND IS QUITE CONSCIOUS OF NATURE OF COVERAGE. WITH PM KY CONCERNED ABOUT HIS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE, THIS COVERAGE HAS NOT BEEN AN INSIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN LEADING TO SOME SECOND THOUGHTS ON PART OF PM KY ABOUT TACTICS OF SOME OF HIS CLOSEST ADVISERS, NOTABLY NGUYEN BAO TRI AND LOAN. WE WILL PRESS POINT WITH CORRESPONDENTS THAT REMEDIAL ACTIONS ARE BEING TAKEN, PARTICULARLY WHEN WE HAVE PUBLIC EVIDENCE SUCH AS RECENT KY ASSURANCES OF EQUAL TRANSPORTAION FACILITIES AND EQUAL ACCESS TO MASS MEDIA FOR ALL CANDIDATES. BOTH THIEU'S AND

PAGE5 RUMJIR 184 C O N F I D E N T I A L
KY'S RECENT PUBLIC EMPHASES ON FREE AND IMPARTIAL ELECTIONS

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WILL ALSO BE HELPFUL.

5. WE BELIEVE THAT WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS IN GETTING MOST OF THE PRESS TO UNDERSTAND THAT KY IS NOT "OUR MAN" (PARA 6 REFTEL), THAT OUR INTEREST IS SOLELY THAT THE ELECTIONS BE FAIR AND HONEST AND THAT US IS AND INTENDS TO REMAIN IMPARTIAL WITH RESPECT TO CANDIDATES. WE ARE HAMMERING THIS THEME IN ALL CONTACTS WITH THE PRESS AND AT ALL LEVELS. AS AN ENTEGRAL PART OF THIS THEME WE ARE EMPHASIZING THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL CONCERNED THAT THE ELECTIONS BE A TRUE EXPRESSION OF POPULAR WILL AND THUS A MEANINGFUL CULMINATION OF THE TRANSITION TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT.

6. OBVIOUSLY WE HAVE ALSO MADE EVERY EFFORT TO CONVINCE THE LEADERSHIP AND THE PRESS OF OUR CONCERN OVER THE DANGERS OF A SERIOUSLY DIVIDED MILITARY. AS A COROLLARY WE HAVE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF MILITARY UNITY AFTER THE ELECTIONS AND OF CLOSE MILITARY-CIVILIAN COOPERATION. THE PRESS HAS GIVEN FULL PLAY TO THE THREAT TO MILITARY UNITY IN THE KY-THIEU

PAGE 6 RUMJIR 184 C O N F I D E N T I A L
CONFRONTATION, AND IN DEALING WITH THE PRESS WE MUST RECOGNIZE THE PROBLEM FRANKLY.

7. WE HAVE STRONG RESERVATIONS ABOUT URGING VARIOUS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES TO APPOINT PRESS OFFICERS FOR CONTACT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS. IN FIRST PLACE, THERE IS DEARTH OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL FOR SUCH ASSIGNMENTS. IN ADDITION, WE FIND NO LACK OF READINESS ON PART OF OPPOSITION VIETNAMESE TO DEAL WITH THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS. IN FACT, VIETNAMESE POLITICIANS HAVE LONG SINCE LEARNED THAT ONE MEANS OF PRESSURE ON GOVERNMENT IS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL PRESS AND THEY ARE UTILIZING THIS CHANNEL ASSIDUOUSLY. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THEY AHVE BEEN SOURCE OF MUCH RECENT CRITICISM AND THERE IS ALSO PREDICTABLE PROSPECT THAT THEY WILL, AS IN THE PAST, SUBSTITUTE RUMORS AND MYTHS IF FACTS ARE NOT AVAILABLE. WE DO NOT FEEL WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THIS PROSPECT THROUGH APPOINTMENT INEXPERIENCED PRESS OFFICERS FOR INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES WHOSE ONLY YARDSTICK OF SUCCESS MAY BE QUANTITY OF SENSATIONAL CRITICISM OF THIEU AND KY THAT THEY STIMULATE BY WHATEVER MEANS POSSIBLE. CANDIDATES THEMSELVES HAVE ALREADY AND WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE TO BE SUFFICIENTLY ACCESSIBLE TO PUT ACROSS "FULL AND FAIR" PICTURE OF THEIR ACTIVITIES AND VIEWS.

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84

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 184

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JOINT EMBASSY/JUSPAO MESSAGE

REF: STATE 214625

8. DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE AWARE OF OUR CONCERN ABOUT OVERALL CALIBRE OF PRESENT PRESS CORPS IN SAIGON, EVEN INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF MAJOR OUTLETS. MANY OF MOST EXPERIENCED AND MATURE CORRESPONDENTS HAVE BEEN REASSIGNED OR TAKEN SUMMER LEAVE. WITH TOO FEW EXCEPTIONS, PRESS CORPS TODAY IS YOUNG, INEXPERIENCED IN VIET NAM AND EAGER TO MAKE NAME AND REPUTATION THROUGH EMPHASIS ON NEGATIVE ASPECTS. WE WOULD HOPE MORE SECROR HANDS RETURN WEEK OF

ELECTION
AND THAT DEPARTMENT WILL DO WHATEVER IT CAN TO ENCOURAGE THEM, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO ARE IN GENERAL SUPPORT OF OUR EFFORT. IN THE MEANTIME, WE HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 184 C O NF I D E N T I A L
PROCESS TO UNDERTAKE WITH PRESENT GROUP WHICH WILL REQUIRE OUR MOST STRENUOUS EFFORTS THROUGH THE SUMMER.

9. WE FULLY AGREE WITH THE IMPORTANCE TYVREGULAR EXCHANGE WITH THE DEPARTMENT ON THESE PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AS THEY DEFELOP AND WE WILL UNDERTAKE TO DO OUR PART TO SEE THAT THIS IS MAINTAINED. INSOFAR AS THE GENERAL THRUST OF OUR PRESENTATION IS CONCERNED, WE BELIEVE THAT REFTEL PROVIDES GOOD INITIAL BLUEPRINT WHICH CAN BE REFINED TO MEET SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AS THEY ARISE.

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